

The Interesting Story

OF THE

CHILDREN IN THE WOOD,

AN

HISTORICAL BALLAD.

BANBURY :

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CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.

Now ponder well, ye parents dear,
The words which I shall write,
A dismal story you shall hear,
In time brought forth to light.

A merchant of no small account,
In England dwelt of late,
Who did in riches far surmount
Most men of his estate.

Yet sickness came, and he must die,
No help his life could save;
In anguish too his wife did lie,
Death sent them to the grave.

No love between this pair was lost,
For each was mild and kind;
Together they gave up the ghost,
And left two babes behind.

The one a fine and pretty boy,
Not passing six years old;
A girl the next, the mother's joy,
And cast in beauty's mould.

The father left his little son,
As it was made appear,
When at the age of twenty-one,
Three hundred pounds a year.

And to his daughter, we are told,
Six hundred pounds to pay,
In value full of English gold,
Upon her wedding day.

But if these children chanced to die,
As death might soon come on,
The uncle then (none can deny)
Made all the wealth his own.

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Pisarius call'd his brother near,
 As on his bed he lay :
 Remember, oh ! my brother dear,
 Remember what I say ?

This life I quit, and to your care
 My little babes commend :
 Their youth in hopeful virtue rear ;
 Their guardian, uncle, friend.

Their parents both you must supply,
 They do not know their loss,
 And when you see the tear-swoln eye,
 For pity be not cross :

'Tis in your power (now alone)
 Their greatest friend to be ;
 To give them, when we're dead & gone,
 Or bliss, or misery.



If you direct their steps aright,
 From God expect reward;
 All actions are within His sight,
 Of which He takes regard.

With clay-cold lips the babes they kiss'd,
 And gave their last adieu!
 A heart of stone would melt, I wist,
 So sad a scene to view.

With tears, Androgus did reply—
Dear brother, do not fear;
Their ev'ry wish I will supply,
And be their uncle dear.

God never prosper me nor mine,
In whatsoe'er I have,
If e'er I hurt them with design,
When you are in the grave!

The parents being dead and gone,
The children home he takes,
And seems to soften all their moan,
So much of them he makes:

But had not kept the little souls
A twelvemonth and a day,
But in his breast a scheme there rolls,
To take their lives away.



He bargain'd with two ruffians strong,
 Who were of furious mood,
 To take away these children young,
 And slay them in a wood.

Then gave it out both far and near,
 That he them both did send
 To town for education there,
 To one who was their friend.



Away the little babes were sent,
 Rejoicing with much pride;
 It gave them both no small content,
 On horseback for to ride:

They prate and prattle pleasantly,
 As they ride on the way,
 To those who should their butchers be,
 And work their lives decay.



The pretty speeches which they said,
 Made one rogue's heart relent ;
 For though he undertook the deed,
 He sorely did repent.

The other still more hard of heart,
 Was not at all aggriev'd,
 And vow'd that he would do his part,
 For what he had receiv'd.

The other wont thereto agree,
Which caused no little strife;
To fight they go right suddenly,
About the children's life.

And he that was in mildest mood,
Did slay the other there,
Within an unfrequented wood,
The babes did quake with fear.

He took the children by the hand,
While tears were in their eyes;
And for a scheme which he had planned,
He bid them make no noise:

Then two long miles he did them lead,
Of hunger they complain;
Stay here, says he, I'll bring you bread,
And soon be back again.



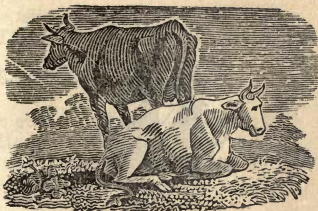
Then hand in hand they took their way,
And wander'd up and down ;
But never more did they survey
The man come from the town.

Their pretty lips with blackberries
Were all besmear'd and dy'd,
And when the shades of night arose,
They sat them down and cry'd.



These pretty babes thus wander'd long,
Without the least relief,
The woods, the briers, and thorns among,
Till death did end their grief.

These pretty babes from any man,
No funeral rite receives;
But Robin Redbreast forms the plan,
To cover them with leaves.



And now the heavy wrath of God
Upon their uncle fell;
The furies haunt his curst abode,
And peace bade him farewell.

His barns consum'd, his house was fired,
His lands were barren made,
His cattle in the fields expired,
And nothing with him staid.



His ships, which both were gone to sea,
Were on their voyage lost,
And fate did order him to be
With wants and sorrows crost.

His lands or sold or mortgag'd were,
Ere seven years were past,
Attend, and you shall quickly hear
How prosper'd guilt at last.

The fellow who did take in hand
The children both to kill,
To die was judged by the land,
For murder—by God's will.

The guilty secret in his breast
He could no more contain:
So all the truth he then confess'd,
To ease him of his pain.

The uncle did in prison die,
Unpitied was his fate:
Ye guardians, warning take hereby,
And never prove ingrate.

To helpless infants still be kind,
And give to each his right;
For, if you do not, soon you'll find
God will your deeds requite.



The trees are now felling in Blackberry Wood,
Where the ruffians did leave both the babes without food.